

“Hands-on” training is essential in learning to apply new information

“guided practice” is the key



by Les Wright
*Field Training Manager
Bently Nevada Corporation*

Based on Bently Nevada's extensive experience conducting training seminars, we know that quality training includes “hands-on” time. To gain confidence using new information, you need to apply the information in a real life situation that is relevant to you. We have also learned that the longer you wait to apply new information, the more difficult it is to remember the details.

Let me give you an example of what I mean by effective hands-on training. I recently went to Bently Nevada's office in Warrington, England. While I was there, I drove a car belonging to a service technician, who was on vacation. Instead of renting a hotel room, I shared an apartment with another Bently employee. On Wednesday, we drove home from work together, and I watched in amazement as he negotiated the five or six traffic circles, called roundabouts. I carefully listened to his description of where to exit each circle.

On Thursday morning, we ran the course again with me watching. That afternoon I followed my friend to the

house, and I followed him to work on Friday morning. On both of these trips, I had my eyes focused on the taillights of his car. I tried to look at landmarks and road signs, but I was unwilling to take my eyes off his car for fear of getting separated.

At work on Friday, my friend informed me that he would **not** be going back to the apartment after work and would be gone all weekend. No problem. I had seen the route twice in each direction. I had even driven once in each direction (hands-on). Well, I got lost somewhere in the third traffic circle as I was going home. I had serious doubts about ever getting back to the office on Monday.

What had gone wrong? My friend told me and showed me how to drive the obstacle course, and I had even driven the course. What went wrong was that I hadn't had “**guided practice**,” the step where someone reassures you when you make a correct choice and corrects you when you make a mistake.

On Saturday, I was with another Bently Nevada employee. While I drove, he sat in the front seat. As I negotiated the office to apartment trip, he encouraged me when I was right and corrected me when I was about to turn incorrectly or make an unsafe move. With this guided practice, I gained the confidence needed to drive alone all the next week.

Guided practice is the step in the training process that gives the student enough confidence to practice alone. Except for the simplest tasks, those of one or two steps that require no decisions or interpretation, the complete training process consists of three steps. First, the task is described and demonstrated. Next comes guided practice. The student talks someone through the task while the instructor praises or corrects him as needed. Only after such guided practice is the student ready for the third step, to practice alone. The number of times that guided practice must be repeated varies with complexity of the task. However, the student should not try to perform the task alone until he has gained the confidence to do so.

These three steps take time, but to maximize his understanding, the student needs time to gain new capabilities and confidence. If the process is rushed and the student sees a task demonstrated but gets little time to practice it himself, he may be confused.

Our Bently Nevada Seminars are designed with at least 50% of classroom time spent in hands-on practice sessions. To gain maximum results, guided practice is essential.

For more information on Bently Nevada Seminars, see page 30. ■